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FBI Says Agents' Life Style Not Dictated

By Keith Richburg
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FBI Director William H. Webster said yesterday the bureau has stopped its practice of dictating rules for the private lives of agents, preferring instead to stress "conduct, not personal beliefs."

Webster said it is "not the rule" anymore for the bureau to penalize agents who break the strict sexual code imposed by the late director J. Edgar Hoover.

"We're trying to stay out of people's private lives, unless their conduct—and the emphasis is always on conduct, not personal beliefs—impacts upon the effectiveness of that individual and the bureau," he said.

Asked if unmarried agents are permitted to live with persons of the opposite sex, Webster replied "I don't have a policy for or against that conduct, but how the bureau is seen is important in our effectiveness."

Webster made his remarks on the television program "Face the Nation" (CBS, WDVM).

About a recent case of an FBI file clerk who was fired for being a homosexual, the director said the feeling of most law enforcement agencies is that with homosexual employes who have access to "top secret" information "there is a potential for compromise for those who engage in such conduct, which is generally not approved by society and in some places illegal."

Webster said, "We treat it as a factor, and in all candor, as a significant factor. It is a troublesome thing."

Webster also said that he will review the findings of the House Assassinations Committee, which just released its 26-volume report on the murders of President Kennedy and the Rev. Martin Luther King Jr.

Webster said any decision on reopening the investigations of their murders will be made by the Justice Department and Congress, with recommendations from the FBI on the bureau's "ability to conduct a subsequent successful investigation." Webster also suggested that an "independent contractor" decide whether the cases can be reopened, so the FBI is not accused of trying to "vindicate our original conclusions."